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JOINT TRAINING IN COMBINED ENTRY OPERATIONS

by

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Biography

CDR Ethan Mitchell is assigned to the Air War College, Air University, Maxwell AFB, AL. He graduated from the United States Naval Academy in 1997 and has served numerous sea tours, including in USS HAYLER, USS AUSTIN, USS ROSS, USS SAN ANTONIO, CARRIER STRIKE GROUP TEN, USS PONCE, and USS NEW YORK, deploying to the FOURTH, FIFTH and SIXTH Fleet Areas of Responsibility. Ashore, he served in the requirements directorate on the Commander, Second Fleet staff and earned a Master's of Science Degree in Physics from the Naval Postgraduate School in 2003. Most recently, he served at Naval Surface Warfare Center Dahlgren Division working in acquisitions and systems engineering.



Abstract

Strategic and operational guidance states that the demand for joint operations will continue to increase for the foreseeable future. Also, challenges to combined entry are ever evolving, and the United States must continue to adapt its tactics and operations to meet those challenges. The continued development of more advanced platforms, capabilities, and concepts demonstrates United States' commitment to maintain and grow its ability to execute combined entry operations. As these new systems come online, new tactics, techniques, and procedures will continue to be developed and tested. For these improvements to be effective, they must be practiced by operational forces in a realistic environment in order to validate platform interoperability, planning efficiency, organizational relationships, and combined operations. Additionally, the guidance emphasizes the requirement to integrate services at all levels, from operational planning to tactical execution, in order to create inter-service relationships that are persistent and spread throughout all echelons. These relationships would best be established through operational interaction that creates persistent contacts, relationships, and mutual procedures to ensure smooth interaction at a moment's notice. The best way to foster this interaction is through frequent and realistic joint training. However, the joint services currently do not have an integrated, delineated approach to accomplish training sufficient to both ensure effective interoperability as well as foster persistent relationships between joint services. The Joint Force should increase both the number and frequency of exercises, include small scale joint operations rather than focusing on major combat operations, and integrate more joint units into established training events.

An **expedition** is a military operation conducted by an armed force to accomplish a specific objective in a foreign country.

Expeditionary — a strategically mobile force that is light enough to get to the crisis quickly, yet able to accomplish the mission or provide time and options prior to the arrival of additional forces.

- *Expeditionary Force 21*

Introduction

The need for the United States to project power through operational access from the sea is as important and influential today as it has ever been. Steadily increasing capabilities in lift, prepositioning, and ship to shore movement platforms continue to expand the United States' reach and ability to divest itself from the need for established infrastructure. Platforms such as new roll-on/roll-off ships, the Mobile Landing Platform, and ship to shore connectors will transform the United States' ability to move larger and more significant capabilities from ship to shore without the need for piers or seaports, greatly expanding the areas to which the United States has access.

As platform capabilities increase, so too must training and interoperability requirements. As service strength decreases, the requirement to act jointly becomes a necessity rather than a preference. To fully develop and leverage improved tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP), increased joint training must be moved to the forefront. Only through realistic training with operational platforms can discrepancies be found and addressed. The myriad of baselines and mixture of legacy and new technology throughout the force requires that US forces operate together rather than count on simulation and developmental requirements, which are limited in their ability to accurately recreate the countless factors that impact real world operations. Only when forces get away from the laboratory and into the field will interoperability issues truly be uncovered and rectified.

This paper argues recent strategic guidance has placed a significant emphasis on globally distributed forces, joint operations, and the ability to project power ashore through combined entry operations. The strategic guidance has been reinforced through joint and service strategies and concepts, demonstrating service commitment to refocus and carry out these priorities with regards to force disposition, capability and platform development, and joint interoperability. However, while strategies and concepts have embraced this effort, the operational forces of the services have not yet been able to truly integrate these priorities in their training, exercises, or operations. There are microcosms within each service that are becoming experts at entry operations, but there is a lack of breadth of that knowledge throughout the force. Operational experience through joint exercises is the only truly effective way to ensure real world interoperability issues, from staff interaction and planning through equipment interoperability and unit level cohesiveness, across all domains and echelons, are identified and remedied.

This paper will discuss current organization and projected capabilities, and will then trace the operational requirement for joint and sea based operations, demonstrating the overarching guidance that requires service interoperability and entry operation capabilities. Finally, it will address current exercises and their objectives and limitations, demonstrating the need for more wide-spread execution and expansion of entry operations and joint activities.

Thesis

Despite explicit requirements for an increase in joint training in combined entry operations across all echelons of command, from operational planners to tactical employment, the services currently do not have an integrated, delineated approach to accomplish the training. The Joint Force should increase both the number and frequency of exercises, include small scale

joint operations rather than focusing on major combat operations, and integrate more joint units into established training events.

Force Composition

US Navy amphibious platforms are multi-mission, persistent, and capable vessels that serve as the cornerstone for sea based entry operations. They support steady state operations, deterrence, prompt crisis response, and power projection across the globe. The typical deployed Navy-Marine Corps afloat unit is the Amphibious Ready Group and embarked Marine Expeditionary Unit (ARG/MEU). This consists typically of three ships, an Amphibious Assault Ship (LHA or LHD), Amphibious Transport Dock Ship (LPD), and Dock Landing Ship (LSD). All three ships carry a variety of troops, aircraft, and landing craft. The LHAs provide central command and control, LSDs provide cargo and primarily surface ship-to-shore maneuver, and LPDs provide large cargo capacity compared with aircraft support facilities that support disaggregated operations.¹ Deployments last approximately eight months, with two to three ARGs typically deployed around the world at any given time.² Depending upon the operational needs, the ARG can be supplemented with surface combatants, submarines, or logistical ships such as fleet oilers to increase their combat power and sustainability, or combine with other ARGs or prepositioned forces to engage in larger operations.

The US Marine Corps is organized into a structure of Marine Air-Ground Task Forces (MAGTFs), a specific construct of force package size that is formed as required by operational requirements. These units are the Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF), Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB), Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), and Special Purpose Marine Air/Ground Task Force (SPMAGTF). The largest unit is the MEF, followed by the MEB, MEU, and SPMAGTF, which is specifically organized for a given mission or function, providing increased

flexibility. Regardless of size, each is composed of four parts, the command element (CE), ground combat element (GCE), aviation combat element (ACE), and logistics combat element (LCE).³ The Marine Expeditionary Force allows for large-scale participation in major joint operations. A MEF does not deploy, but rather maintains situational awareness within their area of responsibility (AOR) and is employed when required to support a combined or joint operating environment, compositing forward-deployed MAGTFs and those formed and deployed in a crisis.⁴

Other dedicated joint entry capabilities primarily reside within the Army in the form of logistics, supply, and ship-to-shore connectors, such as Logistics Support Vehicles (LSV) and Landing Craft Utility (LCU) vessels. In large operations, Air Force units can be designated in a supporting role, however the Air Force has no designated entry assets. Plans such as the legacy Air-Sea Battle, which is currently being updated and reimagined by the Joint Concept for Access and Maneuver in the Global Commons (JAM-GC)⁵, delineate means of support from the joint services. The principle repository for expeditionary equipment, heavy lift, and prepositioning is Military Sealift Command (MSC). The Combat Logistics Force (CLF) provides fuel and provisions to US Navy ships at sea, allowing them to stay on station. The afloat prepositioning force of 25 vessels are strategically placed throughout the globe to facilitate rapid availability of equipment when required, supporting Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Defense Logistics Agency. Finally, the sealift component provides ocean lift capabilities for the entire Department of Defense as well as other federal agencies, during peacetime and war.⁶

Emerging Capabilities

The Navy and Marine Corps are developing alternative platforms as well as investigating modular capabilities on existing vessels to find new ways to meet Geographic Combatant

Commander (GCC) demand and be able to respond to crisis and entry operations.⁷ New platforms include the Mobile Landing Platform (MLP), Afloat Forward Staging Base (AFSB), and Joint High Speed Vessel (JHSV). Existing platforms that may be modified to increase seabased capability are the Littoral Combat Ship by adding a habitability module, or leveraging Maritime Prepositioning Squadron (MPS) ships such as cargo and Large Medium-speed Roll-on/Roll-off Ships (LMSR) in combination with the MLP.

Arguably the most significant and cost efficient capability increase has been the Mobile Landing Platform, operated by MSC. Based upon commercial float-on/float-off technology, MLP provides a surface interface between LMSR or other prepositioned ships and surface connectors such as the Landing Craft Air Cushion (LCAC). The MLP greatly expands seabased capabilities because it allows these ships, which have historically required ports to offload, to use the MLP to offload equipment independent of shore infrastructure.⁸ There will also be two variants that will serve as Afloat Forward Staging Bases (AFSB), integrating berthing, spaces command, control, operations, and logistics functions, as well as helicopter operations.

Applicable Concepts

There are numerous doctrinal concepts that have been developed in order to address how to change and improve operational access from the sea, both from the Joint community as well as service specific. Many of these are recent publications, demonstrating the new emphasis on addressing this difficult concept as well as the significant impact of recent changes. These changes include the USMC's renewed emphasis on their seabased roots, the proliferation of Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) and Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) equipment, the lower cost and increased availability of advanced technology, and continued constraints on military spending. These factors are increasing the requirement for services to

seek innovative solutions, as well as leveraging more joint and multinational capabilities. Below is a description of the most recent concepts that are relevant to this topic as well as discussion on the gaps they identify.

Capstone Concept for Joint Operations: Joint Force 2020

Released in 2012, *Joint Force 2020*'s primary purpose is to develop a "bridge from strategic guidance to subordinate guidance, force develop guidance, and follow-on doctrine."⁹ The most significant conceptual evolution described is the proposal of an approach called globally integrated operations.¹⁰ The fundamental tenant of this approach is the global posturing of Joint Force elements with the capability to combine quickly with each other and mission partners to integrate their capabilities across domains, echelons, geographic boundaries, and organizations, leveraging our military advantage in conjunction with other elements of national power to keep America immune from coercion.¹¹ US forces must counter an increasing rate of technological innovation as well as wider dissemination of the resulting, more powerful and capable, weapons. The eight elements of globally integrated operations include: mission command; seize, retain, and exploit the initiative; global agility; partnering; flexibility in establishing Joint Forces; cross-domain synergy; use of flexible, low-signature capabilities; and increasingly discriminate to minimize unintended consequences.¹²

The operational concept of globally integrated operations will potentially have broad-ranging implications for force development, which are delineated within the document. Of the twenty three implications, there are seven that relate to entry operations. Firstly, the force must "become pervasively interoperable both internally and externally," meaning that there must be seamless synergy in integrated operations, crossing all services, domains, and partners, as well as echelons. "Interoperability refers not only to materiel but also to doctrine, organization, training,

and leader development.”¹³ Additionally, the Joint Force focus must be on the ability to improve strategic and operational mobility and flexibility. The force must be rapidly employable on a global scale using cost-effective, intelligent positioning of forces both forward and at home, with improved versatility and ability to maneuver over distance. Finally, the standardization of TTP across Combatant Commanders will facilitate the shifting of forces across areas of responsibility.^{14,15}

Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower

The Secretary of the Navy, in conjunction with the US Coast Guard, released the *Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower* in which he sets out strategic guidance for the vision of the future force priorities and capabilities for all maritime forces, including US Navy, USMC, and US Coast Guard, tying these capabilities to higher strategic guidance. It emphasizes forward naval presence as essential to defense of the homeland, deterrence, crisis response, defeat of aggression, protection of the maritime commons, partnership, reassurance of allies and partners, and humanitarian assistance and disaster response.¹⁶ The United States will strengthen its naval forces and capabilities through joint and multinational partnerships, establishing and leveraging relationships with joint and multinational partners to maximize the capabilities of all involved and leave all better postured to face new and emerging challenges.¹⁷ Force employment innovations are also addressed, focusing on flexible, tailorable, globally distributed, forward based forces that are expected to react quickly to events with agility and scalable responses.¹⁸ Improved joint interdependence will be vital to effectively executing these innovations.¹⁹

Expeditionary Force 21 – Forward and Ready: Now and in the Future

Expeditionary Force 21 – Forward and Ready: Now and in the Future (EF21) provides a vision of how the USMC will operate “in order to guide experimentation, force development activities, and inform programming decisions.”²⁰ It addresses how the USMC will integrate into the larger naval and joint team with respect to force posture, organization, training, and equipping their force. In line with higher guidance and other force and service concepts, EF21 highlights the need to continue to be forward deployed and expeditionary while taking into account the increased range, precision, and proliferation of A2/AD systems. It proposes the solution of dispersed operations with smaller, task-organized forces.²¹

The Navy and Marine Corps team is the primary service component to take the lead in ensuring expeditionary force entry from the sea. EF21 specifically quantifies the current USMC force posture and proposes specific changes to their operating concept in order to adapt to future requirements. The USMC is committed to continue to conduct amphibious operations and will maintain its maneuverability throughout the littorals to exploit positions of advantage, using distributed and tailored forces to secure entry and rapidly build combat power ashore.²²

Similar to the other concepts discussed, EF21 emphasizes the requirement for increased, more sustained interaction at all echelons between Navy, USMC, and Coast Guard “in order to foster cooperative naval solutions at the institutional, operational, and tactical level.”²³

Joint Concept for Entry Operations

The *Joint Concept for Entry Operations* (JCEO) was released in April 2014 and expands and updates JP 3-18, *Joint Forcible Entry*. It establishes, in broad terms, the joint vision for how forces will enter into foreign territory and immediately employ capabilities to accomplish assigned missions. It builds upon the *Joint Operational Access Concept* (JOAC) as well, because the JOAC focuses on gaining and maintaining access to an operational area, and the

JCEO “focuses on integration of force capabilities across domains in order to secure freedom of maneuver on foreign territory with an operational area.”²⁴ JCEO addresses more than combat operations, including support to internal populations and humanitarian assistance/disaster relief (HA/DR) missions.²⁵ The capacity of the Joint Force to accomplish entry operations not only impacts the conduct of operations, but also the ability for it to conduct assistance in austere environments. When taking into account the often limited infrastructure and accessibility, the ability of the Joint Force to assist in a crisis is greatly impacted by having capable entry forces that can arrive and be effective without the requirement for indigenous infrastructure.²⁶ However, at the forefront of this concept remains the Joint Force’s ability to conduct operations in an advanced area denial environment.²⁷ The Joint Force commander must be able to leverage capabilities across all domains and services, requiring a more interoperable and synchronized joint force. These forces must be mission tailored, flexible, and integrated such that the forces take advantage of preexisting relationships and doctrine rather than having to establish new ones. This requires habitual relationships that include regular planning, training, exercises, and wargames with likely interagency and multinational partners, not through standing Joint Task Force (JTF) requirements, but rather through taking advantage of existing training to identify opportunities for integration and relationship building.²⁸

In order to accomplish this strong integration, the JOAC delineates twenty one capabilities that will be required, divided into command and control, intelligence, fires, movement and maneuver, protection, and sustainment.²⁹ Among these include the ability for joint headquarters to improve interaction and integration between Functional Combatant Commanders, Geographic Combatant Commanders, and multinational partners, the Joint Staff and Combatant Commanders to prepare both headquarters and units for interoperability,

command and control in austere environments, execute effective and complementary special operations and conventional forces, and maintain sufficient command and control and liaison capabilities for interagency and multinational interoperability and interface demands. All of these capabilities will be created, fostered, and improved through a comprehensive plan to conduct regular combined training and exercises. Training and exercises will also facilitate the establishment and reinforcement of procedures for intelligence sharing, fires, integrated and coordinated movement and maneuver, and determining logistical considerations that will be required such as lift capacity, availability, and staging for both initial actions as well as reinforcement and sustainment.³⁰

Joint Concept for Rapid Aggregation

The *Joint Concept for Rapid Aggregation* (JCRA) was released in May 2015 and addresses the requirement for the ability of joint forces to be able to rapidly and effectively coalesce in order to apply decisive force anywhere in the world.³¹ It describes the actions necessary for the United States to improve its ability to rapidly aggregate as part of an escalation or response to crisis. More specifically, it addresses the response to a crisis that a Combatant Commander is unable to address sufficiently with current forces that requires prompt action and the addition of forces.³² The JCRA identifies several historical issues that are faced when the requirement arises, such as pre-crisis planning and global posture, joint training associated with crisis response, response force readiness and availability, Joint Force headquarters formation, crisis action planning while in transition, force and capability sequencing at the start of deployment, Joint Force assembly during joint headquarters transition, incorporation of inter-organizational partners, and command and collaborative relationships.³³ The proposed solution to address the challenges is to reallocate the force globally, so that there exists a decentralized

network of response forces, to be made available to challenge the most pressing operational requirements. This network will be managed by the DoD, allowing them a global perspective and enabling rapid allocation, shifting, and deconfliction fluidly between Combatant Commanders as priorities evolve.³⁴ In order to achieve this solution, the JCRA establishes five key elements to enable a smarter, more agile, and better postured force: global management and synchronization of resources; a decentralized global network among US joint response forces and inter-organizational partner first-responders; ready the response forces through a foundation of enhanced and focuses steady-state preparations; rapidly transition headquarters to an operational stance; and responsively project and aggregate forces in a complex and contested environment.³⁵

Most significantly, the JCRA emphasizes the requirement for more thorough integrated training at all levels. These exercise and training events will foster pre-existing relationships and identify interoperability concerns early in the process in order to ensure effective execution when required.³⁶ This includes shifting the focus of training from after integration to before in order to practice the processes required to achieve rapid aggregation, emphasizing organization, policies, and practices to reduce friction and formation time, and establish information sharing practices. Additionally, the establishment of force modules and subsequent training will increase efficiency and readiness levels, as well as assist in the calculation for strategic lift and organizational interoperability.³⁷ Finally, the sixth required capability delineated in the JCRA is the ability to execute a comprehensive training and exercise program to prepare headquarters for operations, including annual training as well as integrating aggregation tasks and scenarios in joint training guidance and plans.³⁸

Synthesis

The Navy and Marine Corps, as well as the joint community, have a few significant large-scale exercises that address joint entry operations. The first of these exercises to be discussed is BOLD ALLIGATOR (BA). Beginning in 2008, the Chief of Naval Operations and Commandant of the Marine Corps established guidance to “revitalize our amphibious competency” and “achieve the staff proficiency required to robustly exercise simulation-supported and real-world Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG)-MEB CE planning and execution.”³⁹ The goal of the exercises is to “revitalize, refine, and strengthen core amphibious competencies, which are critical to maritime power projection and are a cost-effective option for a wide range of military operations.”⁴⁰ The intent behind the annual exercises is to conduct a mixture of simulated and real-world exercises, with a different focus each year while building upon the previous scenarios, as well as include and incorporate multinational partners. In 2011, the format was a synthetic exercise with an opposed MEB assault in a hostile environment while simultaneously conducting Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations (NEO). In 2012, a combination synthetic and live exercise was conducted, executing and opposed MEB assault. In 2013, a synthetic single naval battle construct was executed, which wholly integrates the air, land, sea, and cyberspace approaches to conducting amphibious operations. Finally, in 2014, previous exercises were continued with crisis response options from the sea and across the range of military operations in an uncertain environment. BA2014 included nineteen countries, seventeen ships, and two submarines.⁴¹ Each year brought significant lessons and development in interoperability, organization, logistical considerations, and planning. Despite the commitment to annual exercises, however, BA has slipped due to the large amount of planning and force coordination required, so the next live event will be conducted in 2017.⁴²

Another large exercise is DAWN BLITZ (DB), conducted by ESG 3. This biennial exercise is a scenario-driven event to train the Navy and Marine Corps in amphibious operations, testing staffs in planning and execution in live training events. DB 2015 included an amphibious assault, mine operations, live fire opportunities, and Maritime Prepositioning Force (MPF) training.⁴³ An additional exercise is VALIANT SHIELD, conducted in Pacific Command (PACOM). Beginning in 2006, this exercise includes significant joint forces, including two aircraft carriers, nineteen surface ships, more than 200 aircraft, and approximately 18,000 personnel from all services. Another biennial event, it focuses on developing a wide range of capabilities, from maritime security to warfighting.⁴⁴

Both DB and VS discuss their goal of creating habitual relationships between joint forces and working to provide pre-integrated joint forces, a goal not explicitly stated but certainly accomplished by BA. While these three exercises are providing vital feedback, updates to tactics, techniques, and procedures, operational experience, and networking between services, only one incorporates actual joint training. The others focus on Navy and Marine Corps integration and execution. While this is vitally important and valuable, it does not necessarily address the need for true joint interoperability. Of the thirteen training and exercise initiatives conducted by the US Navy Surface Force in 2014, only one was truly joint.⁴⁵ The remainder focused on multinational partnerships, which, while again are exceptionally important and rewarding, do not assist the US military's need to gain and foster interoperability.

Another facet of joint training is the apparent tendency to exercise only major combat operations. The assumption, fostered by plans like Air-Sea Battle and now JAM-GC, is that true joint, combined operations will only be required for significant operations, and that working in less severe contingency operations will not require integration. Rather, each service can respond

to smaller contingencies without needing to leverage other services, and if they are required to work together, an ad-hoc relationship can be formed with supported and supporting relationships.

All of the joint concepts addressed in this paper call for increased interoperability between all joint forces in anticipation of a smaller, more fiscally constrained, and more globally distributed force. This applies not only to major combat operations, although that situation is the most dangerous course of action, but through training and more routine, steady-state operations.

The need to expand amphibious operation training to include joint forces is important as well. While the Navy and Marine Corps team increase their integration and interoperability, the joint services must be leveraged as well and incorporated into training at all levels in order to foster early and persistent relationships. This will also foster a greater breadth of experience and interoperability rather than repeated exercises involving the same units, which creates a good depth of knowledge within a limited contingent within each service, but does not spread that experience across the force. One of the assertions in *Joint Force 2020* is that Joint Forces will be changing how they are established and employed. With globally integrated operations, Joint Forces will be established around specific security challenges rather than geographic, or even service, constraints. Hybrid command relationships will become more pervasive.⁴⁶ This implies that interoperability and integration below the staff level is becoming more vital than ever. Scheduled, explicit joint training and exercises across all echelons, from operational planners to tactical execution, both large and small scale, needs to be developed, scheduled, and executed, not only during pre-deployment training but while in theater as well. Only then will joint operations become routine, command and unit relationships established and fostered, and all services embrace and learn to effectively leverage joint capabilities.

Conclusion

It is clear from strategic and operational guidance that the demand for joint operations will continue to increase for the foreseeable future. Also, challenges to combined entry are ever evolving, and the United States must continue to adapt its tactics and operations to meet those challenges. The continued development of more advanced platforms, capabilities, and concepts demonstrates United States' commitment to maintain and grow its ability to execute combined entry operations. As these new systems come online, new tactics, techniques, and procedures will continue to be developed and tested. For these improvements to be effective, they must be practiced by operational forces in a realistic environment in order to validate platform interoperability, planning efficiency, organizational relationships, and combined operations. Additionally, the guidance emphasizes the requirement to integrate services at all levels, from operational planning to tactical execution, in order to create inter-service relationships that are persistent and spread throughout all echelons. These relationships would best be established through operational interaction that creates persistent contacts, relationships, and mutual procedures to ensure smooth interaction at a moment's notice. Real-world operations will not afford planners and operators the luxury of establishing new working relationships and creating ad hoc interoperability. They must already exist and be clearly understood, enabling planners and operators to leverage established and operationally tested relationships and procedures in order to execute without delay.

To accomplish this, the number and frequency of joint exercises must be increased not only at the planner level, but also at the tactical level. Only then will the effectiveness of the Joint Force's interoperability, from the technical to the procedural, be understood. Stressing all aspects of interoperability through frequent, varied exercises will ensure proper identification of

limitations and allow them to be addressed. While current large-scale exercises are effective and create significant feedback to designers and tacticians, the long interval between exercises, as well as the relatively limited participation, reduces the usefulness of the lessons drawn from the exercises. Increased exercises will allow a wider variety of scenarios in order to better mirror situations the Joint Force will likely face. Finally, the inclusion of small, tailored exercises utilizing not only CONUS units, but units within forward areas of operations, should be considered. These exercises will spread the knowledge base more broadly throughout the force and increase the breadth of forces experienced in these operations. Additionally, the increased variety of units involved will broaden the range of operationally tested platforms, greatly increasing the diversity of units that can effectively operate jointly.



Notes

¹ The Amphibious Assault Ships' (LHA/LHD) primary mission is to provide central command and control for embarked Navy and Marine commanders in sea based maneuver and assault operations as well as employing vertical lift and landing craft for the embarked Marines. It includes medical facilities, a troop capacity of over 1800, 125,000 cubic feet for stores and ammunition, and 20,900 square feet for vehicles. Amphibious Transport Dock Ships (LPD) are optimized for flexible employment as well as independent operations, with significant command, control, and communications capabilities. They employ embarked aircraft and surface landing craft for ship-to-shore transfer, and can accommodate over 700 troops, 20,000 square feet for vehicles, and 34,000 cubic feet for cargo, as well as medical and dental facilities. The LPD's indigenous air department and hangar distinguish it from the LSD and allows for more robust air operations and maintenance facilities, also facilitating disaggregated operations. Finally, the Dock Landing Ships' (LSD) primary mission is to transport and launch amphibious assault vehicles and landing craft. There are two variants of the LSD, the Whidbey Island class and Harpers Ferry class. The Harpers Ferry variant greatly increased the cargo capacity of the LSD by sacrificing landing craft capacity. The Whidbey Island class supports almost 400 troops, 9300 square feet of vehicle space, and 4900 cubic feet of cargo space, while the Harpers Ferry class supports the same number of troops but provides 15,200 square feet of vehicle space and 40,700 cubic feet of cargo space. While the LSDs have a flight deck for vertical lift operations, they do not have a hangar so are limited in their aviation support capabilities. U.S. Department of the Navy. *U.S. Navy Program Guide 2015*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Navy, Feb 2015. 85-87

² U.S. Department of the Navy. *U.S. Navy Program Guide 2015*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Navy, Feb 2015. i

³ U.S. Marine Corps. *Expeditionary Force 21 – Forward and Ready: Now and in the Future*. Washington, DC: U.S. Marine Corps, 4 Mar 2014. 12

⁴ Marine Expeditionary Brigades act as the “centerpiece of an expeditionary force in readiness prepared for immediate, effective employment in any type of crisis or conflict.” The MEB conducts planning and exercise command and control (C2) for steady-state operations, responding to crises, and forcible entry operations. Additionally, MEBs include Joint Task Force (JTF)-capable command elements that focus on a specific region in order to better meet Geographic Combatant Commander's (GCC) needs, able to merge forward based and rapidly deploying forces into a single coherent and effective unit tailored for the mission. There are currently four standing MEBs, located in Camp Pendleton, CA, Camp Lejeune, NC, Bahrain, and Okinawa, Japan.

Marine Expeditionary Units provide the forward afloat presence in key regions across the globe. It consists of a reinforced infantry battalion as the GCE, a Marine composite squadron (reinforced) as the ACE, and Combat Logistics Battalion as the LCE. MEUs typically operate as disaggregated units in order to provide a wider array of steady-state security activities as well as immediate response capabilities as required. They can quickly reaggregate and join with other forward forces to provide the foundation of a MEB.

SPMAGTFs are purpose built, task organized units that are specifically tailored for GCC requirements. Their flexibility offers a greater capacity for forward presence in more diverse and unconventional locations. They can be tailored to “conduct security cooperation activities with partner nations in order to develop interoperability, facilitate access, build defense and security relationships, gain regional understanding, and position for immediate response to episodic crises.” U.S. Marine Corps. *Expeditionary Force 21 – Marine Expeditionary Brigade Informational Overview*. Washington, DC: U.S. Marine Corps, 2014. 7-9

⁵ Goldfein, Lt Gen David L, Director, Joint Staff, to Deputy Commanders of the Combatant Commands; Director, Defense Logistics Agency; Director, Defense Threat Reduction Agency; Service Operations Deputies, memorandum, subject: Joint Concept for Access and Maneuver in the Global Commons, 08 Jan 2015.

⁶ Military Sealift Command, “US Navy's Military Sealift Command,” <http://www.msc.navy.mil>

⁷ US Marine Corps. *Expeditionary Force 21 – Forward and Ready: Now and in the Future*. Washington, DC: US Marine Corps, 4 Mar 2014, 20

⁸ US Department of the Navy. *US Navy Program Guide 2015*. Washington, DC: US Department of the Navy, Feb 2015. 90

⁹ US Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations: Joint Force 2020*. Washington, DC: US Joint Chiefs of Staff, September 10, 2012. 1

¹⁰ *ibid*, iii

¹¹ *ibid*, iii

¹² *ibid*, 3

¹³ *ibid*, 10

¹⁴ *ibid*, 8-12

¹⁵ Joint Force 2020 provides a link for subordinate concepts to strategic guidance found in *Sustaining US Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*, as well as guidance in force development. In *Sustaining US Global Leadership*, the Secretary of Defense laid out ten priority missions for the department. Of those, the three that most impact the discussion within this paper are deter and defeat aggression, project power despite AA/AD challenges, and provide a stabilizing presence throughout the world. US Department of Defense. *Sustaining US Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*. Washington, DC: U.S Department of Defense, Jan 2012. 4-5

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¹⁷ U.S. Department of the Navy. *A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Navy, Mar 2015. 2

¹⁸ *ibid*, 9

¹⁹ *ibid*, 28

²⁰ US Marine Corps. *Expeditionary Force 21 – Forward and Ready: Now and in the Future*. Washington, DC: US Marine Corps, 4 Mar 2014. 4

²¹ The USMC will “provide timely and scalable forces for crisis response, allowing commanders to tailor force footprints to evolving situations and effectively composite modular MAGTFs by combining forward-deployed forces with rapidly deploying forces.” *ibid*, 9-11

²² *ibid*, 22

²³ *ibid*, 29

²⁴ US Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Joint Concept for Entry Operations*. Washington, DC: US Joint Chiefs of Staff, 07 Apr 2014. 5

²⁵ *ibid*, 6

²⁶ *ibid*, 8

²⁷ *ibid*, 10

²⁸ *ibid*, 14

²⁹ *ibid*, 23-32

³⁰ *ibid*, 32

³¹ US Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Joint Concept for Rapid Aggregation*. Washington, DC: US Joint Chiefs of Staff, 22 May 2015. iii

³² *ibid*, 2

³³ *ibid*, 5

³⁴ *ibid*, 6

³⁵ *ibid*, 7

³⁶ *ibid*, v, 6, 10, 11, 13-16, 28

³⁷ *ibid*, 20

³⁸ *ibid*, 26

³⁹ US Fleet Forces Command. *Bold Alligator 2014 Factbook*. Norfolk, VA: US Fleet Forces Command, 01 Oct 2014. 12

⁴⁰ *ibid*, 12

⁴¹ *ibid*, 12, 19

⁴² Seck, Hope Hodge, "Next Live Bold Alligator Exercise Won't Be Until 2017," *MarineCorps Times.com*, 04 Feb 2015, <http://www.marinecorpstimes.com/story/military/2015/02/04/next-bold-alligator-017/22862249/>

⁴³ Commander, Expeditionary Strike Group Three, "Dawn Blitz 2015," *Navy.mil*, <http://www.public.navy.mil/surfor/esg3/Pages/Dawn-Blitz-2015.aspx>

⁴⁴ US Pacific Fleet Public Affairs, "US Pacific Command Forces Come Together for Valiant Shield 2014," *Navy.mil*, 08 Sep 2014, http://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story_id=83157

⁴⁵ Commander Naval Surface Force, US Pacific Fleet, "Training and Exercise Initiatives," *Navy.mil*, <http://www.public.navy.mil/surfor/Pages/TrainingExerciseEvents.aspx>

⁴⁶ US Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations: Joint Force 2020*. Washington, DC: US Joint Chiefs of Staff, September 10, 2012. 6



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